



State of Vermont
Vermont Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

MEMORANDUM

To: Governor James Douglas
House and Senate Education Committees
C: David Coriell, Education Liaison
Coleen Krauss, OESR
Fayneese Miller, Chair, State Board of Education
From: Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner
Rae Ann Knopf, Deputy Commissioner
Re: Update on *Race to the Top* Competitive Grant Application
Date: December 1, 2009

Availability of Funds

Race to the Top (RttT) is a one time ARRA funding opportunity of \$4 billion dollars. The RFP for competitive applications from States opened November 12th. Applications are being accepted in two rounds. Round 1 is due January 19, 2010; Round 2 is due June 1, 2010. States who are not awarded in Round 1 can reapply in Round 2; however, states may receive only one award. Vermont is applying for funds in Round 1. The budget range for Vermont is \$20-75 million although we can apply for more if our scope substantiates it. Awards will be made by September 2010 and are ‘alive’ for 4 years, which extends this reform funding to the fall of 2014. The application is filed through the Office of the Governor and includes the signature of the Governor, Commissioner, State Board Chair, and Attorney General.

Eligibility to participate in the competition includes states having an approved State Plan for Round 2 of their State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (~\$31m). Vermont Department of Education (VTDOE) is assembling the education portion of this plan and working with the administration to complete the plan by the due date of January 11. The requirements of this plan cause us to rely heavily on the impending implementation of a PK-20 state-wide longitudinal data system. VTDOE is submitting a competitive grant application for funds to implement such as system over the next five years. Should we not be awarded this grant however, funds must be allocated within our state to support this work. Also, states must have no legal barriers to linking student and teacher data and RttT proposals must address all four assurances comprehensively.

Use of Funds

RttT awards must be spent in two ways – 50% for Title I LEAs to use in implementing agreed upon *RttT* proposal plans, and up to 50% for State capacity building and supplementing non-Title I and Title I LEAs in their work. LEAs will be asked to sign MOUs agreeing to participate in the work of any or all of the four assurance areas as outlined by the State’s proposal. Desired MOU signatures include the Superintendent, the school board chair, and the local teacher union representative.

Current Status

In the month of October, Vermont Department of Education (VTDOE) assembled a group of 29 stakeholders to discuss and define Vermont’s *Race to the Top* proposal priorities. Using funds from a Nellie Mae grant, the Department has also been working with a primary grant writer in putting the proposal together. We have applied for additional assistance from the Gates Foundation to support working with a consulting firm to further develop our proposal for submission in Round 1 of the competition. A draft framework document,

Transformative Education in Vermont, is under development and will be available within the next ten days. Preliminary MOU documents will also be disbursed to superintendents within the next ten days. Finally, we believe Vermont to be poised to develop a model for rural and small state education reform efforts. Our long standing reputation for pioneering education innovations, our size, track record with federal funds, interagency relationships, and partnerships with professional associations and institutions of higher education all bode well for us in this endeavor. Race to the Top funds will give us much needed financial assistance in working toward our goal of providing the best educational opportunities for Vermont children as they prepare to enter adulthood in the 21st century.

The attached excerpt from the *Race to the Top* application outlines the selection criteria and point award system.

Attachment: Excerpt from Race to the Top Application

II. Points Overview

The chart below shows the maximum number of points that may be assigned to each criterion.

Selection Criteria	Points	Percent
A. State Success Factors	125	25%
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEAs' participation in it	65	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	
(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	
B. Standards and Assessments	70	14%
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	
C. Data Systems to Support Instruction	47	9%
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	
D. Great Teachers and Leaders	138	28%
Eligibility Requirement (b)	eligibility	
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	
(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	
E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools	50	10%
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	
F. General	55	11%
Eligibility Requirement (a)	eligibility	
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	3%
TOTAL	500	100%
Subtotal: Accomplishments	260	52%
Subtotal: Plans	240	48%